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ABSTRACT

First-year outcomes of the 1990-91 Project Achieve in 32 New York City public high schools are presented in this paper. The program aimed to reduce the dropout rate and improve at-risk student performance by expanding proven initiatives and support services for school-based decision-making committees. This report, the first of a two-part study, focuses on program implementation and the functioning of schoolwide committees. Methodology involved onsite observation and interviews with program coordinators, teachers, and students at 16 participating high schools. Findings indicate that coordinators responded positively to the schoolwide approach to decision making and program management. All sample schools expanded their houses program, developed new instructional initiatives, and instituted or expanded current options. Most schools broadened their community-based organization's services to at-risk students. All participating schools either elected an inclusive shared decision-making committee or utilized an existing school-based management/decision-making committee. Many schoolwide committees changed traditional class schedules, which facilitated innovative instructional initiatives. Recommendations are made to create smaller professional inservice workshops, provide a central clearinghouse to coordinate technical assistance, continue to support successful initiatives, and develop a comprehensive research project. Six tables are included. The appendix lists participating high schools for 1990-91. (LMI)

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OREA Report

Project Achieve
1990-91

PART I

EA 024 621

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Project Achieve
1990-91

PART I

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SUMMARY

This report examines the 1990-91 Project Achieve program in its inaugural year in 32 New York City public high schools. The program aimed to reduce the dropout rate and improve the academic performance of at-risk students through the expansion of proven initiatives, and support services for school-based decision-making committees. This report, Part I of a two-part study, focuses on program implementation and the functioning of schoolwide committees. Part II will summarize outcomes of the students' academic performance.

PROGRAM IMPLEMENTATION

Project Achieve coordinators from sample schools reponded positively to the schoolwide approach to decision making and program management.

All sample schools expanded their houses program, developed new instructional initiatives, and instituted or expanded concurrent options. Most schools broadened their C.B.O.s' services to at-risk students. The broadening of the houses program, and the expanding of C.B.O. services, gave C.B.O.s access to large number of students within houses. Consequently, a C.B.O. staff quickly identified the needs of students, and integrated easily into school routine.

All participating schools either elected an inclusive shared decision-making committee specifically for Project Achieve, or made use of an existing school-based management/shared decision-making (SBM/SDM) committee. All schools instituted either a common preparation period for some staff, or fifth period flex for the entire school. Staff at all sample schools attended staff development and technical assistance workshops.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Many schoolwide committees made changes in traditional scheduling of classes, and thus facilitated innovative instructional initiatives. For example, common preparation time for teachers made possible by shortening the 40-minute period, also allowed students to take part in peer tutoring, independent study, and computer-assisted instructional workshops. This also encouraged better communications, and a change in school tone.

The schoolwide committees varied considerably in their ability to agree on and implement changes because some committees had more experience than others in the skill of concensus decision-making. Most sample schools responded positively to subject area and group development workshops, and the majority of coordinators asked for more training. However, it was impossible to allow all committee members to leave school at the same time, and coordinators suggested that the training be brought to individual schools.

All schools used the services of a wide range of technical assistants, and reported being satisfied with the quality of expertise available to them. However, school staff were somewhat overwhelmed with the range and number of technical assistants and monitors. In effect, coordinators wanted more technical assistance provided by fewer assistants. In response, many technical assistants encouraged school staff to use them as conduits for information. Project Achieve staff also reported that some federal, state, and local programs had reporting and monitoring requirements that duplicated each other. It was suggested that a central clearinghouse be set up to oversee the dissemination of technical assistance, and monitoring and reporting requirements.

Based on the findings of this evaluation OREA recommends the following:

- Continue to provide professional assistance to support schoolwide innovative initiatives, and the consensus decision-making and management process. However, workshops should have a smaller number of participants, and be held at each school.

- Provide a clearinghouse to coordinate and disseminate technical assistance, and to eliminate duplication in federal, state, and local monitoring and reporting requirements.

- Continue to support successful initiatives such as houses, continuity of support services, and concurrent options.

- Develop a comprehensive research project to assess the long-term qualitative and quantitative effects of special programs on participating students.

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I. INTRODUCTION

BACKGROUND

Project Achieve, a school improvement program, was implemented for the first time during the 1990-91 school year in 32 New York City high schools. The program aimed to reduce the dropout rate, improve academic performance, and increase scores on the Regents Competency Test (R.C.T.) in Reading, Writing, and Mathematics of students at risk of dropping out of school. Program planners from the Division of High Schools (D.H.S.) intended to accomplish these goals by fully integrating instructional and support services within schools working towards comprehensive change.

In previous years, dropout prevention initiatives under the auspices of the Attendance Improvement Dropout Prevention (A.I.D.P.) program and the Dropout Prevention Program (D.P.P.) targeted selected schools and provided instruction, attendance, guidance, health, and job services to at-risk students. In 1989-90, the most successful features of these programs were combined to form the Dropout Prevention Initiatives (D.P.I.) program. Finally, with Project Achieve, effective dropout prevention services were expanded to include entire school populations.

Although attendance and dropout rates were not greatly improved during these years, qualitative data revealed that students responded positively to some programs, and many schools developed a climate for change. Program evaluators from Columbia University's Teachers College, and the Board of Education's

Office of Research, Evaluation, and Assessment (OREA) concluded that schools must focus on comprehensive changes that would affect the quality of the experience students had in the classrooms, as well as students' overall perception of school. As a result, funds were provided under Project Achieve to integrate schoolwide planning and program management with the more successful dropout prevention strategies.

PROGRAM GUIDELINES

Under Project Achieve, programs such as houses*, concurrent options**, and other innovative instructional initiatives were broadened to reach out to all students, but continued to focus on ninth and tenth grade students. Services*** provided by community-based organizations (C.B.O.s) to at-risk students were also increased to include a broader range of students.

Many Project Achieve schools had already implemented school-based management/shared decision-making (SBM/SDM) committees in

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*The houses program was initially created to ease the transition of students from middle to senior high schools. Students with similar interests were encouraged to develop group identification, and assigned the same guidance counselor and advisors. Because of the success of houses with incoming students, the program was expanded to include other grades.

**Concurrent options allows students who cannot attend regular classes to earn credits toward graduation in non-traditional ways. For example, a student may be able to join a supervised independent study program.

***Typical services provided by C.B.O.s to students included counseling, tutoring, mediation techniques, and job training and placement. For further information on C.B.O. services, a copy of the "High School/Community-Based-Organization Collaboration Study 1989-90" is available from the Office of Research, Evaluation, and Assessment.

response to Circulars 36 and 41 issued by the Chancellor's office in January and March 1990, respectively, inviting schools to voluntarily join the SBM/SDM initiative. Project Achieve mandated that the remaining schools develop inclusive shared decision-making committees to address schoolwide issues, and encourage comprehensive school changes. The Board of Education's Office of Instruction and Professional Development designed workshops to help staff at schools create effective working committees. For example, workshops were developed on consensus decision-making, creative instructional techniques, and methods of alternative assessment.

Technical assistance was also provided by the State Education Department's (S.E.D.) Excellence and Accountability Project (E.A.P.) to Schools Under Registration Review (SURR)*, the Chancellor's School-Based Management/Shared Decision-Making (SBM/SDM) initiative, the offices of area superintendents, and various offices at the central Board of Education.

Program planners, in consultation with area superintendents, selected 32 schools to participate in Project Achieve on the basis of the school's previous academic performance, and dropout and attendance rates.** Once selected, each school applied for

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*Schools Under Registration Review (SURR) are schools that failed to meet New York State standards on a variety of attendance and achievement measures, and are therefore monitored for improvement.

**All high schools with annual dropout rates in excess of 10 percent, or daily attendance rates (excluding long-term absentees) below 80 percent, were included in Project Achieve.

one of three funding levels to accomplish specific objectives in the areas of restructuring/houses, improving the instructional program, and SBM/SDM. For example, to receive Level I funding in restructuring/houses, schools had to be able to organize all ninth and tenth graders into houses, integrate support personnel such as guidance counselors, and provide maximum continuity of house personnel throughout students' high school careers. To receive Level II funding for restructuring/houses, schools had to be able to extend Level I requirements to all students. To receive Level III funding for houses, schools were required to implement Level II, and, for grades nine and ten, provide a core of teachers with common preparation periods for planning and interdisciplinary cooperation, case conferences, and student/parent interviews.

PROGRAM OBJECTIVES

Project Achieve schools were expected to meet the Chancellor's minimum standards for student performance in the areas of dropout rate, attendance, credit accumulation, and Regents Competency Test scores.

The objectives were as follows:

- Using the 1988-89 school year as a baseline, the difference between the Chancellor's Minimum Standard of a 10 percent dropout rate and each school's rate will be reduced by 60 percent over a three-year period.

- Using the 1989-90 school year as a baseline, the difference between the Chancellor's Minimum Standard of 85 percent, excluding long-term absentees* (L.T.A.s), and the school's average daily attendance rate of ninth and tenth graders will be reduced by 60 percent over a three-year period.

- Using the 1989-90 school year as a baseline, the difference between the average number of credits earned by ninth and tenth grade students citywide and those earned by such students in the school will be reduced by 60 percent over a three-year period.

- Using the 1989-90 school year as a baseline, the difference between the State Education Department's standard and the school's failure rate for R.C.T. Reading, Writing, and Mathematics will be reduced by 60 percent over a three-year period.

This report focuses on the qualitative information gathered from schools participating in the Project Achieve program. A quantitative analyses of student performance and evaluation objectives will be summarized in a separate report as soon as the data are available from central files.

EVALUATION METHODOLOGY

Evaluators from OREA examined the 1990-91 Project Achieve program in the 32 participating high schools. Program evaluators collected quantitative data on the academic performance of students from all participating schools, and from central data files.

In addition, evaluators visited 16 participating schools to interview Project Achieve coordinators, teachers and students, and to observe program activities. Sample sites were chosen on the basis of diversity of location, funding level, and participation in other initiatives.

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*A long-term absentee is a student who has been absent every school day in a calendar month.

SCOPE OF THIS REPORT

This report, Part I of a two-part study, describes the 1990-91 Project Achieve program as it was implemented in 16 participating high schools. Part II of the study will summarize quantitative outcomes. Chapter I of this report gives background information, program guidelines, and evaluation methods; Chapter II details program services to students; Chapter III describes the functioning of schoolwide planning committees; and Chapter IV contains conclusions and recommendations.

II. PROGRAM IMPLEMENTATION

SERVICES TO STUDENTS

Project Achieve coordinators at sample high schools responded positively to the idea of expanding and improving upon successful services provided to students. All sample schools expanded and/or restructured houses, broadened or developed concurrent options, increased C.B.O.s' services, and established some innovative instructional initiatives. Eighty-eight percent of coordinators said they expected to see long-term benefits such as higher student self-esteem, fewer teen pregnancies, and an increased understanding of whom to turn to with problems. Coordinators also hoped to see an improvement in attendance, credit accumulation, and R.C.T. scores.

With the help of Project Achieve program planners, schools chose appropriate funding based on their ability to organize the required tasks. Table 1 lists each sample school's funding level. Forty-four percent of the sample schools received Level II funding, 38 percent received Level III funding, and 19 percent of the schools received Level I funding. In addition, 81 percent of sample schools received supplemental funding ranging from $26,000 to $284,000. for C.B.O. services to students.

All sample schools used Project Achieve funds to hire additional staff. However, each school acted according to their respective needs. For example, both George Washington and Martin Luther King, Jr. High Schools needed to reduce guidance caseloads and class sizes so they hired guidance staff and teachers.

Table 1

Funding Level and Other Initiatives
Project Achieve School Sample 1990-91

School	Funding Level	C.B.O. Supplement	Other Initiatives	Conditions
ALTERNATIVE				
Bronx Regional	I	100,000	SBM/SDM	
B.A.S.I.S.				
Curtis	I	100,000		E.A.P.[a]
Eastern District	III	284,000	SBM/SDM, Chap.1[b]	
Fort Hamilton	II			
William E. Grady		75,000	SBM/SDM	E.A.P.
BROOKLYN				
Bushwick	II	160,000	SBM/SDM, Chap.1, Welcome[c]	
Erasmus Hall	III	84,000	SBM/SDM	E.A.P.
Prospect Heights	III	26,000		E.A.P.
BRONX				
Jane Addams	II		SBM/SDM	
DeWitt Clinton	II			
Theodore Roosevelt	III	210,000	SBM/SDM, Chap.1	
Walton	I	50,000		E.A.P.
MANHATTAN				
Louis D. Brandeis	II	160,000	Welcome	
M.L. King, Jr.	III	210,000	SBM/SDM	E.A.P.
George Washington	III	210,000	Welcome	
QUEENS				
Andrew Jackson	II	40,000	Chap.1, Welcome	

[a]E.A.P. schools failed to meet one or more of the Chancellor's minimum requirements. Thirty-eight percent of OREA's sample schools were in this category.
[b]Chapter 1 is a federally-funded program for schools with students who meet specific economic criteria. Twenty-five percent of sample schools participated in Chapter 1.
[c]Project Welcome is an articulation program in which students from area feeder schools attend orientation classes at high schools they will be attending. Twenty-five percent of sample schools participated in Project Welcome.

- Nineteen percent of sample schools received Level I funding, 38 percent received Level II funding, and 44 percent received Level III funding. Eighty-one percent of sample schools received a C.B.O. supplement.

Eastern District hired family assistants as well as guidance counselors, and Walton added a bilingual guidance counselor to their staff.

Some schools reported they couldn't fill positions because approval of these positions came too late. For example, staff at Andrew Jackson High School pointed out that they "didn't get the go ahead from the Division of High Schools until late in the fall of 1990. By then there was a hiring freeze on paraprofessionals."

INSTRUCTIONAL INNOVATION

All sample schools expanded and developed innovative instructional techniques during the 1990-91 school year. Table 2 shows that when Project Achieve began in the fall of 1990, various sample schools had in place such instructional innovations as block programming, team teaching, cooperative learning, interdisciplinary curriculae, portfolios*, new student groupings, and updated courses, texts, and software. By the end of the 1990-91 school year, a total of 94 percent of sample schools (all but one school) had interdisciplinary curriculae, 88 percent (all but two schools) had block programming, 88 percent had cooperative learning programs, 75 percent used team teaching, 75 percent had new courses, 63 percent were using portfolios, 63 percent used new student groupings, 56 percent had new computer

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*Portfolios, a performance-based assessment technique, are collections of a student's work that he or she develops during independent research projects. A student can choose to include essays, drawings, videotapes, reports, or other efforts that reveal creative thinking and learning.

Table 2

Percentage of Sample Schools Implementing Innovative Instructional Techniques
Project Achieve 1990-91

Instructional	Before Fall 1990	Fall 1990	Spring 1991	Combined
Block programming	75	13		88
Team teaching	63	6	6	75
Cooperative learning	75	13		88
Interdis. curriculum	69	19	6	94
Portfolios	44	13	6	63
New student groupings	38	25		63
New courses	38	38		75
New texts	25	19		44
New software	25	25	6	56

- By the end of the 1990-91 school year, all sample schools but one (94 percent) had interdisciplinary curriculae, 88 percent each had block programming and cooperative learning, 75 percent used team teaching, and 75 percent had new courses.

software, and 44 percent had new texts. The innovations most often implemented by sample schools during the 1990-91 school year were the introduction of new courses (38 percent), the use of new computer software (31 percent), interdisciplinary curriculae, and new student groupings (25 percent each.)

As indicated, all schools but one developed new interdisciplinary courses. For example, four departments at DeWitt Clinton collaborated on a writing skills course to improve R.C.T. scores in English. Similarly, at Louis Brandeis High School, several departments collaborated to develop an R.C.T. improvement class in map and graph reading, and reading and study skills. Staff at Jane Addams High School designed a mathematics class for all entering ninth graders that relates academic skills to various career choices.

While all sample schools but two reported that they used block programming, the framework for programming varied. Some schools, such as Fort Hamilton, blocked ninth and tenth graders by house. Most schools, however, blocked students by subject. In Erasmus Hall's Copernican model, freshmen took two subjects at a time for four weeks, instead of four subjects over a period of 18 weeks.

Eighty-eight percent of schools had cooperative learning programs. For example, juniors and seniors in the health careers program at Jane Addams worked in hospitals and other health care facilities. Elsewhere, cosmetology students worked in retail shops, and business students worked in offices and retail shops.

Seventy-five percent of schools had team teaching which they adapted to their respective needs. For example, students at George Washington High School were homogenuously grouped as a cadre for a common group of teachers, although students did not always take the same courses.

Many schools reported that they were just starting to use portfolios. The curriculum and instruction committee at Martin Luther King, Jr. was experimenting with a portfolio project in which social studies students were planning to videotape an oral history of New Yorkers. Seniors from Bronx Regional compiled a graduation portfolio containing student writings, resumes, letters of recommendation, and autobiographical essays.

Alternative Assessment

Some Project Achieve schools also participated in the Accountability Project, a program created to help schools develop alternative means of assessing students' work and progress. With the help of assistors from OREA, schools began to fashion some assessment methods more in tune with current teaching innovations.

Some Project Achieve coordinators were concerned about the mechanics of establishing new assessment guidelines. Andrew Jackson High School wanted department teachers and assistant principals to "discuss what they would want to see in portfolios and set guidelines for evaluation and implementation." Similarly, coordinators from George Washington, Eastern District, and M.L. King, Jr. High Schools wanted a pilot project run by

teachers to study alternative assessment. "Get the professionals who are involved in the classroom...to set criteria on what it means to be successful."

Other coordinators focused on which assessment methods were most appropriate. Fort Hamilton's coordinator argued that portfolios were useful to measure changes in attitudes and values but "let's measure improvement in attendance and compare to previous years." William E. Grady's coordinator argued similarly that "because portfolios are subjective and therefore difficult to evaluate, it's better to use both portfolios and academic scores." On the other hand, the coordinator from DeWitt Clinton felt strongly that evaluation should begin by "talking to students, observing lessons, and group discussion. Numbers don't mean much."

Coordinators also addressed the relationship betweeen innovative instruction and assessment. Theodore Roosevelt High School wanted to proceed by determining desired outcomes and then designing a curriculum to achieve those outcomes. "Now curriculum and instruction are driven by mandated tests. Let's set goals, then develop the curriculum." DeWitt Clinton's coordinator noted that "alternative teaching doesn't prepare students for standardized tests." Coordinators from Louis Brandeis and Prospect Heights suggested giving students credit for work and community experience.

CONCURRENT OPTIONS

In 1990-91, all participating Project Achieve schools added

to their concurrent options programs. Concurrent options were offered to students as alternatives to traditional means of education. Table 3 shows the percentage of schools that implemented each concurrent option and when each option was put in place. Nineteen percent of sample schools added a computer room, 19 percent added a P.M. school, another 19 percent implemented a tutoring program, 12 percent added a concurrent options counselor, six percent began an independent study program, and six percent added services to parenting students.

By the spring 1991 term, all sample schools had a P.M. school and an independent study program, 87 percent offered services for parenting students, 80 percent had a concurrent options counselor, 69 percent had a computer laboratory, and 32 percent began a tutoring program.

Concurrent Options Counselors

Concurrent options counselors helped students choose appropriate programs. The concurrent options counselor at Louis Brandeis High School, for example, matched students and staff in terms of interest areas, and kept logs on progress. The counselor also linked students to outside programs such as college courses and shared instruction (baking courses at Park West High School), and to cooperative technical programs such as welding at the Vocational Technical Center.

P.M. Schools and Independent Study

P.M. schools provided instruction to students after regular school hours and/or on Saturdays. Some P.M. schools gave classes

Table 3

Percentage of School Sample Implementing Concurrent Options
Before and During Project Achieve 1990-91

Option	Before Sept. 1990	Fall Term 1990	Spring Term 1990	Not Yet in Place*
P. M. School	81	13	6	
Independent Study	94	6		
Parenting Students	81		6	13
Computer Room	50	6	13	31
Counselor	68	6	6	20
Tutoring	13	6	13	68

* This column refers to the percentage of schools that planned to install the option but had not done so by the spring 1991 term.

- In the 1990-91 school year, 19 percent of participating schools added a P.M. school, 19 percent each added a computer room and a tutoring program, 12 percent added a counselor, and six percent each added independent study, and services to parenting students,

- By the spring 1991 term, all sample schools had a P.M. school and an independent study program, 89 percent had services for parenting students, 80 percent had a counselor, 69 percent had a computer room, and 32 percent had a tutoring program.

in academic subjects, others provided classes that were not otherwise available, and some provided both.

Andrew Jackson's P.M. school provided mathematics classes with computer-assisted instructional modules to enable students to make up failed courses. At Martin Luther King, Jr. High School, students in the P.M. school made up past failures by taking credit-bearing courses not offered during the current term. Walton used drama and journalism classes to teach academic subjects in imaginative ways. The school also offered R.C.T. preparation and remediation classes on Saturdays. Prospect Heights had a Saturday learning center with a multi-generational approach. The learning center offered credit-bearing courses to students, G.E.D. preparation for their parents, and a variety of cultural activities for younger siblings.

Independent study programs granted students academic credit for completing a supervised course of study, or study modules. Goals were discussed and agreed upon by student and teacher.

The most widely-used independent study program provided students with study packets which they completed under a teacher's supervision, but not necessarily in school. For example, Fort Hamilton's students worked on study packets at home, and received a half credit for each packet completed. Those seniors at George Washington who lacked enough credits for graduation worked on projects at home.

Another independent study model allowed students to complete individually designed coursework for credit. A student and a

teacher signed a contract on what work needed to be done, while an accreditation committee reviewed the projects. At Walton, students selected a topic and contracted with a mentor who assessed the quality of their work. Students at Jane Addams High School also signed contracts to do projects. A standing committee developed guidelines for these projects, and credit was given only after projects were completed and evaluated.

A third model matched small groups of students and teachers with similar interests. At Prospect Heights, after curriculum was approved by a faculty committee, teachers met with students to fully explore one particular topic. Students at Theodore Roosevelt worked as a group on individual courses of study, and then met once or twice a week with a teacher who monitored their progress.

Services to Parenting Students

Eighty-eight percent of sample schools had a program for parenting students. Some programs offered classes; others provided a support services counselor who made referrals, provided individual and group counseling, and helped with applications for services. Bushwick provided special gym and English classes, and Jane Addams High School held classes for students and families on Saturdays. Brandeis had an on-site adolescent health clinic run by Roosevelt Hospital, and held parenting classes. The parent program at Erasmus Hall held discussion groups and also provided workshops and referrals.

Computer-Aided Instruction

Sixty-three percent of sample schools had a computer laboratory and made use of computerized study modules. Schools used their computer laboratory for instruction and remediation in a wide range of subject areas. Prospect Heights' computer laboratory was used for remedial math and reading. Skills were taught in the classroom and computer modules were used to reinforce classroom work through drills.

The computer lab at Louis Brandeis was used by a variety of students. Long-term absentees agreed, by contract, to work in the lab on their mathematics, science, and English for three hours a day. Teachers used a study guide to determine what needed to be accomplished for students to earn credits, and the laboratory coordinator kept track of each student's work and test records. Under a teacher's supervision, some students also used the computer laboratory to work on a newsletter. Also, individual students in need of remediation work could use the lab at lunch time. Erasmus Hall used its laboratory for a remediation program for students testing below New York State's reference points in reading and math. They also bought literacy study modules to meet the specific needs of recently arrived Carribean students. The computer lab at William E. Grady was used by students for work in mathematics, tutoring, or independent study projects.

Tutoring

Most schools had tutoring programs in the planning stages. However, Jane Addams High School had peer tutoring as well as

staff tutoring programs already in place. In addition, ninth graders and an English teacher at Andrew Jackson participated in a volunteer program tutoring local elementary school children in reading.

Transitional Programs

Sixty-nine percent of sample schools developed a transitional program for students who entered school late in the term, or had re-entered school. Eighty-one percent of students in these programs were able to earn credits. Typically, transitional programs had a shorter day than the regular school program, and had block programmed classes.

For example, the transitional program at George Washington High School included a four-period day. Individualized student programs were prepared by the assistant principal for guidance together with teachers and the concurrent options counselor. At Erasmus Hall, the transitional program was organized as an off-site mini school where students could come to make up credits any time during the semester.

In the fall 1990 term, the number of students in transitional programs ranged widely. The program at George Washington served 15 students who were allowed to attend a maximum of two months, Erasmus Hall had 75 students for an entire term, and Prospect Heights had 163 transitional students who could stay no longer than three months. According to the sample of Project Achieve schools, the transitional program averaged 40 students attending for three months.

Common Preparation Time

Sixty-three percent of sample schools instituted a common preparation period for some teachers. Staff used common preparation time for a wide range of activities: 75 percent used it for case conferences, 75 percent for planning cooperative activities such as curriculum and staff development, 75 percent for student/parent interviews, 69 percent for individual tutoring, and 50 percent for computer-aided instruction. Student activities such as independent study were often programmed to coincide with common preparation times.

Twenty-five percent of schools developed fifth period flex schedules, a common preparation period for the entire school one day a week. Fifth period flex developed somewhat slowly since it involved changing traditional school parameters such as 40-minute classes. A flex period was instituted at Jane Addams in September of 1989, but it required a United Federation of Teachers (U.F.T.) waiver establishing four teaching periods and one flex period one day a week. To accomplish this, the school eliminated official class period, and made some periods shorter on flex day. The principal at Louis Brandeis suggested a 1:20 p.m. student dismissal on Tuesdays, and the faculty voted to adopt it. At Theodore Roosevelt High School, houses staff met while students did community service work.

HOUSES

The houses program, first initiated in the New York City public schools in fall of 1987, restructured grades into smaller

units of students with common interests. In an ideal house, students would be block programmed, have the same counselors and teaching staff, and have a dedicated space in which to meet.

Some Project Achieve schools assigned students to a house by grade, but other schools encouraged students to select a house based on interest in its theme. At William E. Grady High School, houses were organized according to various vocational trades, and included guidance in recruitment and employment. At Jane Addams, houses were based on student interests in cosmetology, business, and health careers.

As mandated by Project Achieve guidelines, all sample schools expanded and/or restructured houses in the 1990-91 school year. Table 4 shows the grades each sample school had in houses by the spring 1991 term. Fifty-six percent of sample schools had all grades in houses, 31 percent had their ninth and tenth grade in houses, six percent (one school) had only their ninth grade in houses, and six percent (one school) had their ninth, tenth, and eleventh grades in houses.

Evaluators learned that schoolwide committees greatly helped in the expansion and restructuring of houses. Since houses involved many different areas of responsibility such as teacher assignments, block programming, and space allocation, the committees were able to oversee the implementation of the necessary components.

Continuity of Staff

The continuity of staff, particularly guidance counselors

Table 4

Summary of Number of Grades in Houses
Project Achieve School Sample 1990-91

	All Grades	Ninth Grade	Ninth and Tenth Grade	Ninth, Tenth and Eleventh
ALTERNATIVE				
Bronx Regional	X			
BASIS				
Curtis	X			
Eastern District			X	
Fort Hamilton	X			
William E. Grady	X			
BROOKLYN				
Bushwick			X	
Erasmus Hall	X			
Prospect Heights			X	
BRONX				
Jane Addams			X	
DeWitt Clinton	X			
Theodore Roosevelt	X			
Walton	X			
MANHATTAN				
Louis D. Brandeis	X			
M.L. King, Jr.				X
George Washington			X	
QUEENS				
Andrew Jackson		X		

•Fifty-six percent of sample schools had all grades in houses, 31 percent had the ninth and tenth grades in houses, six percent had only the ninth grade in houses, and six percent had the ninth, tenth, and eleventh grades in houses.

and family assistants, throughout a student's high school career, was considered an important factor in the success of the houses program. Program planners recognized the need for students to establish long-term, stable relationships with adults at school.

Schools varied considerably in staff continuity. More schools provided continuity of support staff than of teachers for individual houses. Seventy-five percent of sample schools provided continuity of guidance throughout students' high school careers, while 31 percent provided continuity of some teachers.

Subject area teachers at Prospect Heights were unable to follow all of their students because of subject specialization. Instead, Prospect Heights provided continuity with guidance counselors, family workers, C.B.O. counselors, and attendance teachers. At Fort Hamilton High School, house coordinators, guidance counselors, and grade advisors were assigned to students for four years, while English and history teachers were assigned for only two years. DeWitt Clinton's guidance counselors had the same students for all four years, and their schoolwide committee was working towards adding dedicated family assistants and counselors.

Again, schoolwide committees had a key role in rethinking staff assignments to provide continuity for houses. For example, William E. Grady's schoolwide committee developed a process for selecting houses' staff. As a result of their selection procedures, key staff were able to remain in place over time.

All Project Achieve coordinators considered the house coordinator, dedicated guidance counselors, and family assistants to be houses' staff. In addition, 81 percent thought assistant principals were part of houses' staff, 63 percent considered dedicated teachers to be a part of the house staff, and 50 percent included deans as house staff.

COMMUNITY-BASED ORGANIZATIONS (C.B.O.s)

Project Achieve provided supplemental funding to schools expanding C.B.O. services to at-risk students. Eighty-one percent of sample schools received this funding, as already seen on Table 1. Services to at-risk students included counseling, tutoring, vocational, and career services. Sixty-nine percent of Project Achieve coordinators reported that the role of C.B.O.s in their schools expanded during the 1990-91 school year, while 13 percent said it narrowed, and six percent said that it remained the same.

As a direct result of the increase in C.B.O. services and the restructuring of houses, C.B.O.s were able to effectively publicize their services and attract more students to their programs. Previously, C.B.O.s had to spend a considerable amount of time on recruitment, i.e., setting up tables in the cafeteria, going into classrooms, or seeking out staff for student referrals. Now, the C.B.O.s attended staff meetings and joined house committees. For example, the staff of the C.B.O.s serving Bushwick and Jane Addams High Schools met with Project Achieve staff weekly. The C.B.O. staff at Andrew Jackson High School attended house meetings and received student referrals directly

from house coordinators. Walton's C.B.O.s provided workshops to make house staff aware of what services they were offering.

Many C.B.O.s assigned their staff directly to houses during the 1990-91 school year. This allowed C.B.O. staff to reach and serve students quickly and effectively, and at the same time become integrated into their host schools. For example, a C.B.O. staff member serving Bronx Regional served as a family group leader and a member of the school's house leaders' committee.

Some schools assigned students directly to C.B.O. staff for support services. For example, Louis Brandeis assigned 75 at-risk students from one house to the C.B.O. Manhattan Valley for support and vocational services. The entire ninth grade at Eastern District was assigned to one of two C.B.O.s, either ASPIRA for educational services, or the Federation Employment and Guidance Services (FEGS) for vocational services. All students were assigned regardless of whether or not they were at-risk of dropping out of school.

The C.B.O.s at Prospect Heights and DeWitt Clinton assigned a caseworker to each school's house. The caseworker worked with the guidance counselor and house coordinator to provide case management, crisis counseling, and referrals. At Curtis, the C.B.O., Foreign Policy Association, gave seminars for students within houses.

III. SCHOOLWIDE PLANNING COMMITTEES

All schools participating in Project Achieve were asked to develop inclusive shared-decision making committees to address schoolwide issues, plan effective strategies, and encourage comprehensive school change.

COMMITTEE FORMATION

Participating schools varied widely in how they made schoolwide decisions prior to the 1990-91 school year. Fifty percent of sample schools created a decision-making committee especially for Project Achieve, while the other 50 percent had a pre-existing SBM/SDM committee. However, of those who already had SBM/SDM committees, some chose to create yet another decision-making committee especially for Project Achieve. As a result, 81 percent of sample schools had a shared decision-making committee in addition to their Project Achieve committee. The size of the committees ranged from 8 members at Prospect Heights to 32 members at Walton High School.

Of those schools with more than one schoolwide committee, 44 percent had some of the same members on each committee, and 25 percent had committees with overlapping functions. An additional 25 percent shared both some members and responsibilities. For example, M.L. King, Jr.'s SBM/SDM team, formed in the spring of 1990, overlapped in membership with its Project Achieve committee. However, all Project Achieve planning was carried out by King's Project Achieve committee. Walton had a 32-member Project Achieve committee, and also a consultative council made up of students, teachers, the principal, and a U.F.T. consultant.

The committee and the council overlapped in function and membership.

Sixty-three percent of schools with two schoolwide committees reported that communication between committees was usually informal, but that members sometimes attended each others' meetings. Fifty-six percent of the committees worked on at least one project together.

All participating schools elected their Project Achieve committee members, but the process varied. Most schools (56 percent) chose members from a schoolwide slate. Thirteen percent voted on a constituency-based slate made up of teachers, paraprofessionals, administrators, parents, students, or U.F.T. representatives, while another 6 percent chose from among representatives of every license area. An approximately equal number of schools voted on faculty-picked slates, or on ballots chosen by restructuring committees made up of staff, students, and parents. In addition, another 6 percent of schools chose from ballots made up of volunteers.

Evaluators from OREA asked program coordinators how schoolwide committees changed the decision-making process in their schools. All coordinators reported that their schools now had a broader base of active participants who made decisions by consensus. The coordinator of Project Achieve at Andrew Jackson said that they now had more input from all categories of staff, and that "many decisions are not made without discussion with the U.F.T. representative and all concerned personnel." Eastern

District's coordinator noted that "...in the past, decisions rested with the administration, and staff had not been involved in decision-making. Achieve is the first time a team has been involved in planning and implementation." Eighty percent of coordinators said the Project Achieve committee received strong support from school administrators; 20 percent said their committee received moderate support. None of the schools reported low support.

The change to schoolwide committees and consensus decision-making has not occurred without growing pains for many schools. For example, the staff at George Washington High School observed that the process that "...allows for greater staff input and involvement in new initiatives, also slowed the process and deterred implementation." William E. Grady's coordinator concurred that consensus decision-making took longer because of the constant discussion. On the other hand, Bronx Regional, an alternative school, reported that their "...staff has always been involved in decision-making and running the school."

Committee Objectives

Project Achieve program planners mandated that each committee design appropriate strategies to reach program objectives. As a first step, each school conducted a self-audit in which they reviewed instruction and support services, identified problem areas, and planned short and long-term strategies. Once established, schoolwide committees met every six weeks with staff from the Office of Instruction and Professional Development to assess their progress, and, if

necessary, revise strategies. At different times during the school year, members of the schoolwide committees also participated in staff development workshops.

Most schools immediately looked for ways to improve educational outcomes, and targeted attendance rates, credit accumulation, and R.C.T. scores. A smaller number of schools hoped to first work out the decision-making process before planning strategy. For example, DeWitt Clinton wanted to increase the areas of school based decision-making, and involve parents in committee work. The committee at M.L. King, Jr. wanted to improve communication within the school and establish a SBM/SDM team.

Assessment of Strategy

Six weeks into the fall 1990 term, the Office of Instruction and Professional Development met with representatives from all Project Achieve committees to reevaluate strategies. At this time, some schools decided that they needed to develop better ways to track students' performance. For example, George Washington's committee decided to track incoming ninth graders who participated in ICE* and Project Welcome, and compare their performance with other incoming ninth graders. Also, several committees applied different tactics. Andrew Jackson's committee

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*ICE (Institute for Career Exploration) is a six week summer program for Chapter 1-eligible incoming ninth and tenth grade students. Activities include remediation and occupational awareness classes.

mailed out interim report cards to parents of ninth and twelfth grade students to keep them informed of their child's progress. Eastern District's committee also decided to report to parents more frequently by sending academic progress reports to students' homes every three weeks.

Several schools that had earlier focused on academic objectives now added support services for students. For example, Erasmus Hall's committee developed remediation and tutoring groups, planned a math resource center, offered additional support for their off-site mini school, and planned to strengthen their program for incoming Limited English Proficiency (LEP) students from Haiti.

Those schools that had initially concentrated on the decision-making process now had the opportunity to use information gleaned from staff development workshops. George Washington High School involved an assistant principal in the house program, promoted staff development and interdisciplinary activities among house teachers, and planned a common preparation period for house staff.

After an assessment meeting that took place at the beginning of the spring 1991 term, about one-half of the participating schools chose to build on successful initiatives. For example, George Washington continued to refine their houses by programming teachers to teach exclusively within a house. Eastern District divided ninth grade holdovers into two houses, one for over-age students, and the other for students who needed a little further

help to get promoted. William E. Grady High School continued its successful effort to reach out to students by sending postcards and making phone calls, and "in 10 days we had only eight 'no shows*' where last year we had 100."

In contrast, the other half of Project Achieve schools decided upon radical school changes after the spring assessment. For example, Walton reorganized their entire school into eight houses effective spring 1991. Curtis planned "to find educational alternatives for students not successful at Curtis." These alternatives included General Education Diploma (G.E.D.), and vocational programs at other schools. Bushwick's committee addressed problems due to overcrowding and the double sessions of classes. They planned to reduce enrollment and become a single session school by implementing a "new discharge code for students who were L.T.A.s in junior high school and became L.T.A.s at Bushwick." They also worked with the U.A.P.C.** to access information on the number of students failing two or more subjects. The school hoped to establish an alternative program for these students.

Convening schoolwide committee members at six-week intervals greatly helped schools to assess their initial strategies, and make timely modifications. By mid-term, many schools had

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*"No shows" are students who register for, but who do not attend, classes.

**The University Applications Processing Center (U.A.P.C.) is a computer system used by the Board of Education to schedule courses for students, and track results.

developed and integrated new programs, and addressed schoolwide issues. Assessment cycles also encouraged several schools to develop new ways to track students' attendance and academic progress.

Impact of Committees on Schools

Eighty-one percent of sample schools reported their schoolwide committee had an impact on the administration, and on the overall management and tone of the school, and 75 percent said it affected instruction as well as the linkage of programs.

Schoolwide committees pointed to the restructuring of houses, rethinking of staff and space assignments, developing interdisciplinary instruction, changing traditional procedures such as grading, and improving school tone as their most significant tasks.

The implementation of schoolwide planning freed schools to reorganize in ways that worked for them. Sixty-nine percent of schools reported changing traditional school parameters such as the 40-minute period or the five-period day. For example, Prospect Heights restructured the school week for L.T.A.s and returning students by scheduling three days of classes and two days of job training. Changing the bell schedule and eliminating official classes gave house staff at George Washington time to address student development and curricular changes. M.L. King, Jr.'s committee decided that because of the large number of program changes made early in the school year, the first marking period should be shortened, and letter grades rather than number grades used during that marking period.

Focusing on school tone, M.L. King, Jr.'s committee changed cafeteria entrance and exit procedures to avoid disturbing classes in session. The committee set up a supervised room where students who had finished their academic day and were waiting for period nine activities could relax and watch television. Walton's committee implemented cross-departmental collaboration to improve instruction in several academic areas. William E. Grady's committee discussed how to bring together academic and vocational staff. George Washington's committee organized a collaborative to improve students' reading and writing skills. The collaborative's first initiative was to invite reading and writing specialists to work with all departments.

Although most schools made changes successfully, 50 percent of the coordinators in sample schools identified areas in which their committee was unable to make an impact. For example, William E. Grady tried to establish awards for excellence in education, but the committee couldn't come to a consensus. "We learned we need help from a facilitator on process," commented the Grady coordinator. The faculty at Eastern District voted against a plan proposed by the schoolwide commmittee. The plan called for the development of houses based on themes but teachers felt the school was not ready. Instead, the team designed houses with guidance support services. When consulted, staff and technical assistants were optimistic that such conflicts would be resolved over time.

<u>The Decision-Making Process</u>

When asked if they would like to see changes in the decision-making process, 56 percent of sample schools said yes, 31 percent said no, and 13 percent were undecided. Of the schools that wanted change, most wanted to include more people in the decision-making process. A small number of schools wanted to decrease inclusiveness, or remain as they were.

Both Walton and Curtis wanted to involve more students, staff, and parents. On the other hand, the staff at Jackson wanted to "empower a small group of people to make decisions instead of having a large group consider everything." Eastern District wanted to "change our by-laws which stipulate a 75 percent majority vote to a 66 percent vote for approval on issues of structural change." Staff at William E. Grady wondered "maybe consensus isn't the best way."

A staff member at Theodore Roosevelt summed up the difficulty of consensus decision-making: "How to get people to understand that team decision-making is democracy? There is impatience...we don't make quick decisions." Consequently, committee members wanted to "...streamline the decision-making committee to make decisions more quickly. It is difficult with 23 members."

Thirty-eight percent of the coordinators reported that there were aspects of the shared decision-making process in their school that they wanted to disseminate to other schools. Bronx Regional wanted to share its "total input from staff and students." Similarly, William E. Grady wanted to share the benefits of "input from all supervisors and all licensed

teachers." Bushwick wanted to share "the good way the team functions."

While there were many differences among committees in their experiences with consensus decision-making, and their ability to successfully address schoolwide issues, most schools showed enthusiasm for the process. It is important to note that despite differences, many committees have already had a beneficial effect on a variety of schoolwide issues and services to students.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT WORKSHOPS

In accordance with program guidelines, the Office of Instruction and Performance Outcomes provided staff development workshops for staff from Project Achieve schools. Staff from all sample schools attended subject area conferences on new approaches to mathematics, and the use of computer-generated data from U.A.P.C. In addition, they attended workshops in team building, group management techniques, and conflict resolution.

Sixty-four percent of respondents found the workshops and conferences useful, 31 percent found them somewhat useful, and 6 percent did not find them useful at all. Fifty percent of respondents reported that information on specific subject areas was especially useful, and added that the smaller the workshop size, the more beneficial it was, 50 percent found team building and decision-making workshops especially useful, and added that more staff could attend if they were held in individual schools.

Some schools found that both subject area and team building workshops were equally helpful in improving services to students.

Bronx Regional's committee reported that subject-area workshops helped them become "more organized, and therefore more focused on classroom instruction." Participants from DeWitt Clinton said that the subject-area workshops helped by promoting an informal means of collaboration among staff. At Theodore Roosevelt, the committee found that after working on team approaches, "staff developed a common language useful in team building... which created an environment to change and improve instruction."

Sixty-nine percent of respondents wanted more professional development. For example, Erasmus Hall's staff wanted more workshops on alternative teaching strategies, while the staff at Curtis wanted information on individual learning styles and their application to teaching. Jane Addams and Brandeis High Schools asked for training in budget management.

Forty percent of respondents requested that workshops be held in their schools, noting that a significant number of teachers could not leave the building at the same time. Forty percent also wanted smaller workshops, and 40 percent asked for better coordination of staff development meetings and conferences by the organizing agencies to avoid duplication.

TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

All Project Achieve schools had technical assistants and monitors available to them as needed. Technical assistants for pedagogical and organizational consultation were provided by the central office of the Board of Education, superintendents'

offices, the State Education Department, and the Office of Educational Data Services (O.E.D.S.) The State Education Department also provided a monitor for SURR schools and for schools receiving assistance under Chapter 1 guidelines*. Table 5 lists all of the types of available technical assistants and monitors, and the percentage of schools that reported using them.

Ninety-four percent of sample schools used assistants from the Board of Education's Division of High schools, and 94 percent used a school improvement specialist from their superintendent's office. Sixty-three percent used a staff member from the Office of Instructional and Performance Outcomes, 63 percent also used an SBM/SDM facilitator, and 56 percent used a Chapter 1 facilitator. Thirty-eight percent used an OREA assistor provided by the project to help them explore alternative assessment approaches. Fifty percent of sample schools required a SURR monitor, and 38 percent had a Chapter 1 monitor.

OREA asked a sample of technical assistants to list the type of help most often requested by Project Achieve committees. As shown in Table 6, 82 percent of Achieve committees requested information on innovative instructional approaches, 73 percent wanted to know what other schools were doing, 68 percent requested help with evaluation, 50 percent wanted help with self-assessment, and 32 percent needed advice on disseminating their team's decisions. Forty-five percent each asked for help

*A school qualifies for federal Chapter 1 funding based on a formula that calculates the number of children in the school's attendance area in families receiving Aid to Families with Dependent Children (A.F.D.C.), and the number of students in the school eligible for free or reduced lunch.

Table 5

Summary of the Percentage of Project Achieve Sample Schools Using Technical Assistants and Monitors
1990-91

Assistant or Monitor	Percentage of Schools Using
Division of High Schools Liaison	94
School Improvement Specialist (Superintendent's liaison)	94
Office of Instructional and Performance Outcomes	63
SBM/SDM Facilitator	63
Chapter 1 Facilitator	56
S.E.D./SURR Facilitator	50
S.E.D. Chapter 1 Monitor	38
OREA Assistor	38
U.A.P.C. Speaker	13

- Project Achieve sample schools most often used technical assistants from the Division of High Schools (94 percent), and school improvement specialists (94 percent). Only 13 percent of the schools used a speaker from the University Applications Processing Center (U.A.P.C.).

Table 6

Categories of Technical Assistance Requested
Project Achieve Sample Schools 1990-91

Assistance Requested	Percentage of Schools Using
Innovative instructional approaches	82
What other schools are doing	73
Help with evaluation	68
Help with self-assessment	50
Communicating to administration	45
Involving persons other than staff (e.g.parents)	45
Making decisions and assuming leadership	45
Disseminating the team's decisions	32

- Technical assistance most often requested by sample schools included innovative instructional approaches (82 percent), what other schools were doing (73 percent), and help with evaluation (68 percent).

communicating with the administration, with getting parents and others involved, and in making decisions (assuming leadership).

Technical assistants were asked to describe instances in which they successfully helped a Project Achieve committee. A school improvement specialist reported that Bushwick needed help creating and utilizing a database for school statistics. The technical assistant arranged for a staff member from the Office of Educational Data Services (O.E.D.S.) to visit the school and train personnel in using computer-generated data.

The High School Division's liaison to Bushwick reported that "Project Achieve and SBM/SDM were operating separately. The school wanted to see how the teams could work together. I helped them discuss their needs, and now Achieve is a subgroup of the SBM/SDM team." The school improvement specialist to M.L. King, Jr. reported that the school "was looking for alternatives to textbooks because there is a problem when they don't get returned. We created the 'great Manhattan Book swap.' A letter was sent to all Manhattan high schools for lists of books they were willing to give up and books they needed. Schools then contacted each other."

School staff and technical assistants agreed that assistants provided needed and useful services to the schools. However, 63 percent of coordinators said they needed additional assistance or support. M.L. King, Jr.'s staff wanted to update their library into "a multimedia center, laser discs, and long distance learning via a computer communications system to communicate with schools in other boroughs or enable two classes to

communicate...." Prospect Heights wanted help with grant and proposal writing. William E. Grady High School wanted to collaborate with businesses such as Brooklyn Union Gas or Consolidated Edison. Bronx Regional wanted ongoing assistance with use of computers in the form of "a regular assistant in the school rather than one-time training." Theodore Roosevelt High School wanted help in designing a career development program.

All schools reported that they were well satisfied with the quality of help provided by their technical assistants. However, they had difficulty sorting through the wealth of expertise available, and identifying what help would best suit their particular needs. Many technical assistants and coordinators agreed with the observation of a staff member at Brandeis that "people are falling all over each other to offer technical assistance." In fact, staff at some schools reported feeling overwhelmed by the number of people working with them. Some technical assistants, sensitive to the fact that schools felt burdened by too many helpers, tried to serve as conduits for useful information. "I try not to burden them with me. I come in and help them if they ask," commented one central staff member.

On the one hand, schools were overwhelmed by the amount of assistance available to them, and on the other, the majority of coordinators asked for additional help. A clearinghouse for technical assistance would allow for greater coordination between schools' specific needs and available help. Each school might have one assistant who could serve as a conduit to a range of specialists.

Project Achieve coordinators and teachers also reported that some federal, state, and local program requirements for reporting progress and maintaining standing committees duplicated one another. For example, the State Education Department's E.A.P. program and Project Achieve mandated a similar planning process, and a schoolwide improvement committee. It was suggested that a clearinghouse for technical assistance could also monitor these requirements.

IV. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

CONCLUSIONS

Project Achieve coordinators responded enthusiastically to the schoolwide approach to decision-making and management. They were positive about expanding successful initiatives to entire school populations, while continuing to focus on the ninth and tenth grade students. Eighty-eight percent of coordinators reported that they expected to see long-term benefits from Project Achieve.

All participating schools developed new instructional initiatives such as interdisciplinary courses, expanded concurrent options, and restructured their houses program. In particular, the restructuring of houses allowed C.B.O.s to work more directly with students and significantly increased services to students.

Many schools changed traditional schoolwide scheduling such as the 40-minute period and five-period day, and instituted a common preparation period for teachers, or a fifth period flex for staff and student meetings. These changes contributed to better communications and an improvement in school tone.

All participating schools had inclusive shared decision-making committees working on schoolwide issues. About half of these committees were formed under the Project Achieve mandate, while the other half had been created in response to one of the earlier SBM/SDM initiatives. Understandably, with varying degrees of experience, some committees functioned more smoothly than others. Despite some difficulties, all sample schools

reported that their staffs remained committed to the process. More importantly, even first year planning and management committees successfully addressed some schoolwide issues. The support provided by staff development workshops was an essential factor in the success of committees.

Project Achieve staff reported that subject-area workshops were especially beneficial, and group development and management seminars very useful. Unexpectedly, schools reported that the latter seminars had benefitted teaching as well as team building. A staff member of Theodore Roosevelt observed that "staff developed a common language useful in team building...which created an environment to change and improve instruction."

Coordinators stated, however, that they could not allow all participating staff to leave the school building for training. Many staff members also noted that the more successful workshops were those with fewer attendees. Both of these issues could be addressed by taking staff development workshops to individual schools.

All committees made use of technical assistance, and reported they received quality service. At the same time, school staff often felt overwhelmed by the large number of technical asssistants and monitors available. Most technical assistants were sensitive to this overabundance, so they made themselves available on call rather than insisting on regular meeting times.

However, schools did not always know how to obtain the specific kinds of assistance they needed. A central clearinghouse could coordinate the efforts of technical

assistants and monitors. The office might assign each school one technical assistant who could serve as a conduit to an array of specialists and information. The same office could also coordinate efforts to meet federal, state, and local reporting requirements.

In the past, when specific programs failed to show results in terms of students' academic performance, program planners moved on to new initiatives. Project Achieve planners departed from this tradition, and identified strategies that showed some success and much promise. They then asked schools to expand these programs, and adapt them to their own particular needs. However, it is unreasonable to expect programs to immediately translate into measurable improvements in academic performance. Developing a portfolio, working closely with a mentor, or receiving counseling from one professional throughout a student's high school career may affect achievement only after a student has left the school. It would be useful, therefore, to develop a comprehensive, longitudinal project to track the qualitative and quantitative benefits to students. Such a study could answer questions that are key for planning programs for at-risk students, such as which services affect students' attitudes and behavior, and how long does it take to make a difference?

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of this evaluation, OREA recommends the following:

- Continue to provide professional assistance to support schoolwide innovative initiatives, and the consensus decision-making and management process. However, workshops should have a smaller number of participants, and be held at each school.

- Provide a clearinghouse to coordinate and disseminate technical assistance, and to eliminate duplication in federal, state, and local monitoring and reporting requirements.

- Continue to support successful initiatives such as houses, continuity of support services, and concurrent options.

- Develop a comprehensive research project to assess the long-term qualitative and quantitative effects of special programs on participating students.

APPENDIX A

Project Achieve Participating High Schools 1990-91

ALTERNATIVE

Bronx Regional

B.A.S.I.S.

Automotive
Boys and Girls
Curtis
Eastern District
Fort Hamilton
John Jay
Sarah J. Hale
William E. Grady

BROOKLYN

Bushwick
Erasmus Hall
George W. Wingate
Prospect Heights
Thomas Jefferson

BRONX

Adlai Stevenson
DeWitt Clinton
Evander Childs
Jane Addams
James Monroe
Morris
South Bronx
Theodore Roosevelt
Walton
William H. Taft

MANHATTAN

George Washington
Julia Richman
Louis D. Brandeis
Seward Park
Martin L. King, Jr.
Washington Irving

QUEENS

Andrew Jackson
Far Rockaway